

PEN PORTRAIT OF A POSSIBLE PRESIDENT

Judge Alton B. Parker, a Man of Method and Enormous Capacity for Work.

STORY OF HIS EARLY CAREER

Decided When a Boy to Become a Lawyer—Experiences as Teacher and Judge.

The impression you receive on meeting for the first time Judge Alton Brooks Parker, Chief Justice of the New York Court of Appeals and now a leading candidate for the Democratic nomination for the Presidency, is likely to be that the Judge's personal appearance does not suggest his tremendous capacity for work. It is not that his presence and bearing are lacking in distinction, for in any gathering he would almost certainly attract attention as a man above the ordinary. Nearly six feet in height, broad shouldered, straight as an arrow, with clean-cut features and eyes that have a piercing, though kindly gaze, his personality is markedly distinguished. But there is nothing judicial about it. If ten men who had never laid eyes on the Judge before and did not recognize him from his pictures were asked for an opinion as to his station in life, probably the majority of them would set him down as a bank President or a leading financier, but it is safe to say that none of them would pick him out for a Judge.

The preconceived notion which most people have about any Judge is that he will be either a man of ascetic countenance, indicating much use of the midnight oil and absolute indifference to physical culture, or a big, strong man of severe and frowning mien. Judge Parker does not fit in with this conception. Although he is a great student there is not the slightest suggestion of the bookworm about him. Gifted by nature with a strong physique originally, he has preserved it by his fondness for outdoor life. He takes great pleasure in horseback riding and has a stock farm of which he is proud. Neither is there any suggestion in Judge Parker's countenance of that type of man who "dumps the law" like a Jove hurling thunderbolts. Judge Parker is suavely itself. It is the general verdict of those who have tried cases before him that a more courteous Judge than he is not to be found.

Another reason, perhaps, why Judge Parker's high calling is suggested by his personal appearance is that he dresses fashionably. No better dressed man than he will be seen on Fifth Avenue, nor no man whose clothes fit better.

A Prodigious Worker.

Judge Parker is now fifty-two years of age. He has scarcely a wrinkle in his face, and his whole appearance is that of a strong man who had an ideal life. The fact is that all his life he has been a prodigious worker, and if the marks of toil have not been left on his countenance or his frame the explanation of that marvel lies in the care which he has taken to keep his physical vigor unimpaired. His perfect health enables him to dispose of an amount of work which would break down a man of ordinary strength. Since he became Chief Justice of the Court of Appeals that court has shown an ability to dispose of a much larger number of cases than ever before in its history, and in the case of a much better place than that at Virgil. Young Parker, much crestfallen, proposed that he return to Virgil the next morning and cancel his engagement. "No," said his father; "you have made it and you must keep it. I have observed that when a young man falls in that way he is pretty apt to fall through life."

When he is in Albany Judge Parker lives at the Ten Eyck Hotel. He always puts on evening dress for dinner. His manner is most democratic. After dinner he comes out into the corridor of the hotel to smoke a cigar, and he has a kindly greeting and a pleasant word for every one he knows. While he often sits down for a few moments' chat with a friend or a party of friends he never lounges around long, because he has work to do on his opinions at night, and work is something he never shirks.

All who enjoy the pleasure of an intimate acquaintance with Judge Parker attest the fact that he is in love with his judicial work. Nothing less than a nomination for the presidency could tempt him away from the judicial life. This he has shown by his rejection of proffered high political honors in the past. Nominations for United States Senator, Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and First Assistant Postmaster General have all been turned by him at various stages of his career.

When Judge Parker is not in Albany he lives at Esopus, near Kingston, on the Hudson, where he has a beautiful country home. Judge Parker was born in the country and he has never lost his love for country life.

His birthplace was Cortland, in Cortland county, between the towns of Binghamton and Syracuse. He helped on the farm during the summer and attended the district school in the winter until he was thirteen years of age. He then



entered the Cortland Academy. He remained a student of that institution for three years.

His Early Ambitions.

His ambition to become a lawyer was early formed and came about in an interesting way. His father was summoned for jury service in a case which was to be tried at Cortland. He brought young Alton to court with him. The case was of some importance, and one of the parties to it had employed the services of a Syracuse lawyer of some distinction as a pleader. This lawyer's address made such an impression on young Parker that when he and his father were driving back to the farm he informed his parent that he intended to become a lawyer when he grew up. Once having formed that purpose he began to bend all his efforts toward its accomplishment. To get the money necessary to attend law school the young man decided to take up teaching upon the completion of his academy course. In connection with this stage of his career he himself relates an incident which is eloquently suggestive of the sturdy honesty of his ancestry.

On the Friday afternoon on which he received his certificate from the Cortland Academy he hired a horse at the village stable and started out, unknown to his father, in search of employment. After a thirteen-mile drive and several disappointments he was engaged by the Trustees of Virgil Township School. His father, too, had lost no time in looking out for his son's interests, and at the same time that the young man was on his quest in search of employment the father had secured him an engagement, which from a pecuniary standpoint, was more attractive than that which the young man had concluded for himself.

When the young man returned home late at night and related to his father with some pride the result of his mission, his father, instead of sharing in his elation, expressed his regret, explaining that he had secured for him the promise of a much better place than that at Virgil. Young Parker, much crestfallen, proposed that he return to Virgil the next morning and cancel his engagement. "No," said his father; "you have made it and you must keep it. I have observed that when a young man falls in that way he is pretty apt to fall through life."

There were some boys at the Virgil school who were larger than their sixteen-year-old teacher, and he found it difficult to maintain discipline. One day when he had corrected the bully of the school, the individual not only resented the correction but showed fight. One blow from young Parker's fist sent him sprawling to the floor. After that the young teacher had no difficulty in commanding obedience from his pupils.

When he had obtained a degree from the Cortland Normal School, young Parker sought some post as a teacher which would enable him to enter upon his law studies at the earliest possible date. He obtained such an opportunity in Ulster county. He took charge of the public school at Rochester. In that county, at the age of twenty, his salary being \$3 a day, he held that position a year, devoting all of his spare time to the study



of the law. Augustus S. Schoonmaker, then a prominent practitioner at the bar of Kingston, took a fancy to him and he was received into the law office of Schoonmaker & Hardenbergh. Later he was enabled to take a two years' course at the Albany Law School.

Early Political Triumphs.

Soon after young Parker entered his office Mr. Schoonmaker was elected County Judge. He was defeated for re-election after a hard campaign, and was so disheartened that he decided to withdraw from politics. Believing that his patron was unduly discouraged, young Parker arranged for Schoonmaker's nomination for State Senator in the following year and prevailed upon him to accept the nomination. Parker managed the campaign. Schoonmaker was elected, and his prestige in politics restored. Parker's success in managing Schoonmaker's campaign brought him into prominence in Ulster county politics, and in 1877 he was nominated for Surrogate. He was the only Democrat on the county ticket who was elected that year.

Judge William Lawton, the Republican who had defeated Schoonmaker for County Judge, was picked out as Surrogate for re-election in 1882. Parker won by the handsome majority of 1,400 in a total vote of 15,000. When he had served two years of his second term David B. Hill, the Democratic candidate for Governor, who had watched Parker's successful political work in Ulster county with much interest, reached the conclusion that Parker was the man he wanted to manage the State campaign. Parker was elected to the Democratic State Committee at Hill's instigation and made its chairman. His conduct of the State campaign proved that Mr. Hill's estimate of his ability was fully justified. Largely owing to his masterful work the whole Democratic State ticket was elected by pluralities ranging between 11,000 and 12,000.

Many Nominations Declined. Parker had declined a nomination for

Lieutenant Governor in 1883 and 1885, giving as his reason that he did not wish to abandon his chosen field of labor—the law. President Cleveland tendered him the First Assistant Postmaster Generalship, but this he also declined, and for the same reason.

When Theodore R. Westbrook died, leaving the Supreme Court Justiceship for the Third Judicial District vacant, Gov. Hill immediately appointed Parker to the vacancy. His record on the bench during the time for which he was appointed was such that he was unanimously nominated to succeed himself by the Democrats, and the Republicans did not put up a candidate against him.

While he was serving as a Justice of the Supreme Court he refused to consider a tender of the Democratic nomination for Governor in 1891, and after the election of Mr. Hill to that office he declined to be a candidate for United States Senator, although urged to do so by Mr. Hill and all of the influential Democratic leaders. In 1902, when Coler was nominated for Governor, all that prevented the nomination of Judge Parker by acclamation was the report circulated by his close friends, Mr. Hill in particular, that if the nomination should be conferred upon him in opposition to his wishes he would decline it. Nearly every politician in the State, Republican as well as Democrat, now admit that Judge Parker had been the nominee against Gov. Odell in that year he would have been elected.

Judge Parker was thirty-four years of age when he became a Justice of the Supreme Court. In 1897, when he was in his forty-seventh year, he received the nomination of his party for Chief Justice of the Court of Appeals. That was the year in which the Democracy of the State and Nation was in the slough of despond, owing to the defeat of Mr. Bryan the previous year in his first campaign for the presidency. The Republican majority in the State in 1896 had been 215,000. Two years before Hill had been beaten for Governor by 150,000. The man

Judge Parker has for the use of himself and family.

When the visitor stands upon Judge Parker's porch and takes in the magnificent scenery it is impossible to suppress a feeling of envy. It is a perfectly ideal place for day dreams. One wonders whether Judge Parker has ever had to battle with himself against the temptation of doing far afield which it holds forth.

The older part of Rosemount Hall was standing when the British fleet anchored directly in front of it in 1777, on the night before Kingston was burned. Through the centre of the house runs a broad hall, used as a living room, the walls of which are lined with a miscellaneous collection of books—the works of standard writers of prose and poetry.

Judge Parker's library occupies nearly the whole of the southern half of the first story. The walls of the room are nowhere visible. From the polished hardwood floor to the ceiling mount row after row of books. There are thousands of them. Revolving cases support still other books to which the Judge has found he needs to make frequent references. In a small flat-top table, while down the centre of the room stretches a big Directors' table. On these tables, upon which there are more books and usually piles of documents, Judge Parker does his work.

A Practical Farmer.

When at Rosemount Hall Judge Parker rises at 7 o'clock, and one of his first acts during the summer months is to don a bathing suit, run down the steep hill to the Esopus landing, and take a plunge into the Hudson. He is an expert swimmer and is fond of that form of exercise and recreation. After breakfast he usually mounts his saddle horse and takes a ride around the farm, which comprises several hundred acres. All of the operations of the farm are carried on under the supervision of the Judge himself, who is a practical farmer.

The Judge's special hobby is his blood cattle. The inspection of the farm is completed about 11 o'clock, and returning to the house, Judge Parker reads his mail and the morning papers until noon, when the family sit down to luncheon. After the midday meal Judge Parker shuts himself up in the library with his private secretary and the family see nothing more of him, unless there is urgent reason for disturbing him, until he is called for the evening meal at 6 o'clock.

Even when he is in Albany presiding over the sessions of the court the Judge does not allow himself to be robbed of his daily exercise. He is up by 7 o'clock every morning, and no matter how cold the weather may be he has a horseback ride before breakfast.

Judge Parker is methodical in all that he does, and in this fact is to be found the explanation of how he manages to accomplish the vast amount of work he does.

ST. LOUIS EXPOSITION, SPECIAL RATES VIA C. & O. RAILWAY. The sale of tickets to St. Louis, Mo., and return for the Exposition will commence April 25th; \$21.50, good for fifteen days; \$26, good for sixty days; \$31.20, good until December 15th. Special coach excursion May 24th, \$10 round trip.

Esopus, where Judge Parker has his residence, is a modest little village on a hill from which the eye can sweep the picturesque river and mountain scenery stands Rosemount Hall, which is the name Judge Parker conferred upon his home. The house, which stands fully 100 feet above the river, is a big square two-and-a-half-story structure. All about it are giant trees, and the approach to it is along a gravelled path which divides a perfect lawn ornamented with flower beds. A trail leads down to the river bank, and at the end of the trail in the summer there is moored a naphtha launch, christened the Niobe, which

who accepted the nomination for Chief Justice of the Court of Appeals on the Democratic ticket in 1897, therefore, was taking what most Democrats believed to be an empty honor. Even the committee which brought the tender of the nomination to Judge Parker told him that they thought there was no show for his election. But despite the discouraging outlook he decided to take the nomination and the result of the election astonished the leaders of both parties. Parker was elected by a plurality of 69,883.

Judge Parker's Home Life.

Early in his career Judge Parker married Mary L. Schoonmaker. They have had two children. John M. Parker, their only son, died at the age of seven years. Bertha, their daughter, married Charles Mercer Hall, the young rector of the Episcopal Mission of the Holy Cross at Kingston. She has two children, Alton Parker, four years of age, and Mary, two years. Judge Parker takes great delight in his grandchildren. It needs no effort on his part to forget his judicial dignity long enough to have a romp with them whenever the opportunity offers.

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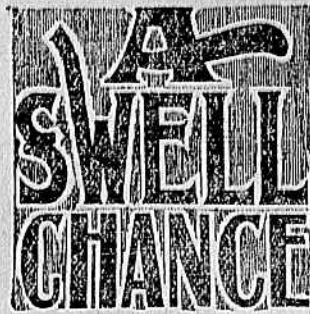
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